

in a row now we will see a significant downturn in farm production in terms of money that comes to the farmers. This is being brought about by depressed prices, by the fact that we have not been opening up new markets, the fact that we have let countries block our farm products from China to Japan as well as Europe and get away with it. In the case of Europe, they are systematically ignoring WTO decisions with regard to bananas. Now we have the impending problem with beef.

So at a time when our markets are not being expanded and opened up, at a time when prices are depressed, farmers are looking for any sign of hope and encouragement. And yet here we are, for the third week, tangled up with an unrelated issue to agriculture.

This is not a small bill. This is \$60.7 billion for agriculture in America. There is a strong feeling that there is probably going to be a need for additional disaster assistance. I saw where some States right now are looking at another serious drought. You add that on top of depressed prices, declining markets instead of growing markets, and now a drought on top of that, you have the prescription for a disaster.

So we may have to come back and take a look at that later on this year. But farmers need some encouragement right now. They need to know what they can depend on.

The schools need to know what they are going to be able to count on in the next school year that begins in August, by the way, not at the beginning of the next fiscal year. They need to know what they are going to be able to count on.

So we have had this delay because an agreement can't be reached as to how to bring up the Patients' Bill of Rights. Frankly, for 8 months I have been trying to find a way to do just that. I have offered repeated suggestions—the fairest one of all probably just to have a jump ball and say, OK, we will begin here and at a date certain, after a reasonable period of time, we will be through with it. But we tried all kinds of variations.

I read into the RECORD last week the complete unanimous consent agreement I had suggested on Thursday that would have allowed us to bring it up, would have had a reasonable time for consideration, 2 hours on first-degree amendments, 2 hours on second-degree amendments. I don't know how I could be any fairer. That, too, was rejected.

So I have tried repeatedly to make this happen. Add to that that this is a charade. This is a farce. This is not for real. So not only are the farmers being taken advantage of, they are being played with. They are being laughed at. Every Senator knows, men and women, Republican, Democrat, regardless of region, no amendment that is added from the Patients' Bill of Rights to the agriculture appropriations bill will ever see

the light of day. It will be sheared like wool from a sheep before it gets to the conference just the other side of the Rotunda. It will not happen—not the Feinstein amendment, not some other amendment, not the Kennedy alternative. It will not be a part of the agriculture appropriations bill and shouldn't be. It is still legislating on an appropriations bill. It is an unrelated, nongermane amendment that is being insisted on by, I think, really a few on the Democratic side of the aisle.

So this is a farce, ladies and gentlemen. We should no longer allow the people's business to be shunted aside and delayed and obstructed and held up by this kind of activity. We should treat it for what it is. It is a charade. It is a farce. But it is not a happy one. It is a sad one.

I encourage my colleagues today on both sides of the aisle, don't be a part of this. We should summarily dismiss as frivolous these amendments that are being added or offered to be added to this agriculture appropriations bill. Maybe they are substantive. Maybe some of them have merit. But to offer them here, who are we kidding? Nobody, nobody in this room. I think most Americans know this is not a serious effort.

Can we work out a way, an agreement to bring this up for a reasonable period of time and still get our work done in terms of the appropriations bills and other legislation that is pending, some of it in conference, some of it waiting to come before the Senate? The bankruptcy reform package is waiting for action. The flag burning constitutional amendment has been passed by the House of Representatives. Yet we are over here tangled up in a procedural activity.

I think we should not be a part of that. I am going to insist that we dismiss it and that we move on and get our work done. I really hope and reach out to the leadership on the other side of the aisle and say: Let's see if we can't find a way to deal with this at another time in a way that is fair to all sides. Let's go on and pass these appropriations bills. Several of them that I have not even mentioned here today we could probably move through very quickly, in a limited period of time, with limited amendments, because there are just not going to be a lot of amendments offered, and do some of the other business, including the nominations that we all know should be at least given an opportunity to be considered.

I just wanted to lay that marker down and get that word firmly planted in our lexicon. This procedure is a farce. It will not happen.

And by the way, just to make sure I was on totally safe ground, it always behooves one to check with the appropriations chairman to make sure he agrees. He agrees. He obviously is of-

fended and upset that his bills out of the Appropriations Committee are being delayed, and he agrees we should not have these legislative matters, these extraneous matters being used to delay very important appropriations bills so that we can get our work done.

By the way, the President is out there saying: Let's work together. Great, let's do. I am ready for deeds, not words. I want us to have Medicare reform, but the commission, the bipartisan commission's work was basically rejected. The President didn't allow one of his nominees of the commission to vote for it. Yet we had Democrats and Republicans who were for it. The Finance Committee, I believe, is willing to move forward in a constructive way. If he wants to work on some of these issues, we would certainly be glad to find the time to do it.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LOTT. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LOTT. Madam President, what is the pending business?

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

#### AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2000

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume consideration of S. 1233.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1233) making appropriations for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Feinstein Amendment No. 737, to prohibit arbitrary limitation or conditions for the provision of services and to ensure that medical decisions are not made without the best available evidence or information.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Feinstein amendment is the pending business.

AMENDMENT NO. 1103 TO AMENDMENT NO. 737

Mr. LOTT. Madam President, I send a second-degree amendment to the desk to the pending Feinstein amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Mississippi [Mr. LOTT] proposes an amendment numbered 1103 to amendment No. 737.